

Hawaii MARINE

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Marine recalls Silver Star actions

Cpl. Michelle M. Dickson
Combat Correspondent

In last week's edition, the *Hawaii Marine* published a photo of 1st Lt. Stephen Boada, an artillery officer assigned to 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment who received the Silver Star for his actions while serving with 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, in Afghanistan. The following is a detailed account of the events for which Boada was recognized.

"May 8, 2005. That was a memorable day," said the young Marine officer as he sat back in his chair, beginning his account of what had happened that cold, wet day in Afghanistan. This was a day that would change a few Marines' lives forever and would earn 1st Lt. Stephen J. Boada, fire direction officer, 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, the Silver Star for his actions.

Boada was assigned to 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, during that time, serving as a forward observer and forward air controller during a deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

This was the first time for the Bristol, Conn. native to be deployed to Afghanistan – an experience he said he looked forward to.

"You always train for the possibility of being deployed," said Boada, "It was good to finally have the opportunity to put that training to use. Even though some of it seemed pointless at the time, there was a good reason for all of it. In what seems like a symphony of chaos, there is organization."

In Afghanistan, Boada found himself with Kilo Company, 3/3, where he took part in a multitude of information operations, patrols and civil affairs while also coordinating aircraft and mortars in the area.

While moving on a five- to seven-day patrol operation in eastern Afghanistan, Boada and roughly 30 other Marines set out in a mounted convoy through the Alisheng Valley to gain information about suspected insurgents.

This particular patrol was only supposed to last during the daytime hours, but this day would be different, and two of the Marines would not come back alive.

"We set out at approximately 0700 in a mounted convoy through the Alisheng Valley," said Boada. "As you start to come up through the valley, the road eventually ends for vehicles, so we set out on foot. We were trying to get to the end of the valley and as we went along, would stop at villages, consulting elders about certain issues."

When the Marines got closer to the end of the valley, the Icom scanners that were being used to pick up radio frequencies began receiving radio traffic. The transmissions, translated by the Marines' interpreter, were determined to be that of enemy forces who were watching the Marines and plotting to ambush them in the valley.

"We could hear them discussing how many of us there were, and how we would never make it out alive," said Boada. "So from there, we set up a satellite communications antenna and called back to higher headquarters. We requested close-air support to sweep the hills, but the poor weather wouldn't allow it."

The radio traffic continued as the Marines proceeded to move through the valley. They were only stopped when they heard, "They

See Boada, A-3



Sgt. Joe Lindsay

1st Sgt. Gerard Calvin, first sergeant, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment passes out candy to local Afghan children in the village of Yargul, located near Asadabad in the Kunar Province of eastern Afghanistan. Calvin, a native of Richmond, Va., is currently serving on his third tour of duty in Afghanistan.

Winning hearts and minds in Afghanistan

Sgt. Joe Lindsay
Combat Correspondent

Marines from 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, based here, met recently with village elders in the small hamlet of Yargul, located near Asadabad in the Kunar Province of eastern Afghanistan, in an effort to get a better understanding of the village's humanitarian needs.

The Marines, led by 1st Sgt. Gerard Calvin, first sergeant, Charlie Company, 1/3 handed out food and candy to the multitudes of young Afghan children who followed them through the streets of the village as they made their way to the meeting.

"We couldn't have asked for a better reception," said Calvin, a native of Richmond, Va.,

currently serving his third tour of duty in Afghanistan. "The people greeted us with open arms. It is obvious that they are happy we are here."

After receiving hugs, high-fives and plenty of smiles from the throngs of villagers who came out to welcome the Marines, Calvin, accompanied by representatives from the U.S. Army as well as Afghan service members, attended a meeting at the home of one of the leading village elders.

"During the meeting, we discussed potential humanitarian projects that we would like to help them with, such as possibly building a new school as well as helping them with projects aimed at getting electricity and safe drinking water," said Calvin. "We also offered to

have our corpsmen do medical checkups on the children. These people are our neighbors. They support us and we support them."

"The elders also spoke of horrors inflicted upon their countrymen by the insurgents and expressed their gratitude that we were here to help the Afghan National Army and their country do something about it," added Calvin.

According to Capt. Jared Spurlock, company commander for Charlie Company, 1/3, meetings such as the one attended by Calvin are of the utmost importance.

"Having a good relationship with village elders is absolutely critical," said Spurlock, a native of Pocatello, Idaho. "The purpose of these

See Hearts, A-6

Sea Services Women's Symposium scheduled to take place at Base Theater

Sarah E. Fry
Public Affairs Staff MCBH

All ranks of active duty service members as well as the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard Reservists are invited to attend the first Sea Services Women's Symposium to be held at the Base Theater and in Joint Education Center classrooms here March 21.

The keynote speaker will be Maria Boren, author of "Living a Fulfilled Life." Boren serves as the vice president of marketing for a publicly traded real estate investment trust company headquartered in Richmond, Va. She has 10

years experience in the fields of marketing, branding, sales, business management and advertising, and holds a bachelor's degree in business and an MBA in specialty studies (entrepreneurial marketing) from Regent University in Virginia. Boren also competed as one of 18 second-season finalists on the "Apprentice."

Selected flag and general officers and senior enlisted speakers from each service are invited to take part in two discussion panels and a variety of break-out sessions. Online registration for the Sea Services Women's Symposium began Jan. 31. A registration fee of

\$5 will be charged each attendee. Two optional all-ranks events are planned on the same day of the SSWLS — a luncheon and an after-hours networking event at the Officers' Club.

The goal of the one-day symposium, themed "Make a Difference," is to provide a professional mentoring and development opportunity for active duty service members and of the sea-service Reservists. The event will serve to educate attendees by providing valuable information and encourage the creation of relationships and networks in which strategies for leadership success

can be developed.

The impetus for this event springs from statistical realities. The first is that, despite drastic recent-year improvements in military culture, women still leave the military at a higher rate than their male counterparts. Studies have also shown that the three sea services have a higher rate of attrition than either the Army or Air Force.

The women's symposium is not limited to female attendance. It is intended for sea-service leaders of all ranks, both male and female. Its objective is to provide education

See SSWLS, A-6

1/12 gains valuable experience

Cpl. Megan L. Stiner
Combat Correspondent

Marines with Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, participated in a unit deployment program in Japan over the past seven months which took an unexpected, but successful, turn of events.

The mission included the artillery unit to perform training in an unfamiliar area, integrating the battery sections into one working unit and increasing overall unity among the Marines.

"The mission was a success in my opinion,"



said Sgt. Damon L. Davoren, artillery cannoner and section chief, Bravo Battery, 1/12. "By the end of each day, I felt as though they all got positive training."

After participating in the initial training exercises in Okinawa, Japan, the battery set out toward Fuji, but en route, a typhoon caused them to take a drastic turn.

"We had to change course and go to Sasebo Naval Base because of the typhoon," explained Davoren, a Brooklyn, N.Y. native. "Although we couldn't perform the training we expected, we spent our time in training classes until it was no longer dan-

gerous for us to travel."

Not only did the Marines continue to utilize their time effectively in a classroom setting, according to Davoren, they also spent time cross training with other work sections in an effort to give all the Marines a better understanding of how the individual battery sections operate.

Another area the Marines traveled to during their deployment overseas was Yausubetsu, Japan, where they spent four months participating in live-fire training exercises – which was the most beneficial training

See 1/12, A-6

News Briefs

CI/HUMINT Specialists Needed
Marine Corps Counterintelligence/Human Intelligence is looking for intelligent, motivated, multi-talented and ambitious corporals, sergeants and staff sergeants who have less than eight years time in service for a lateral move to the 0211 military occupational specialty.
For information on prerequisites, training and operations ask your career retention specialist, Marine Corps Base Hawaii Base Career Retention Specialist Master Sgt. Buckley at 257-7723 or the Marine Forces Pacific CI/HUMINT Branch at 477-8447.

Free Flu Shots and Education
Tripler Army Medical Center's Preventive Medicine and Army Public Health Nursing Departments along with tri-service clinicians are providing Pandemic Influenza Education and free flu shots to eligible military beneficiaries around Oahu.
Public health events will be held at the Marine Corps Exchange Feb. 11, and at the Navy Exchange Pearl Harbor Feb. 12 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Volunteers Needed for Survey
Survey takers are needed for the 2006 Sea Services Women's Leadership Symposium, to be held March 21, aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii. Survey takers can go to www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=725521377979 or <http://tinyurl.com/araat> to take the survey.
For more information, contact Lt. Cmdr. Desarae Janszen at 541-2125, or by e-mail at djanszen@d14.uscg.mil; or Master Sgt. Milton White, MCB Hawaii equal opportunity advisor, at 257-7720, or milton.d.white@usmc.mil.

Art Auction
There will be an All Hands Art Auction Feb. 25 from 6 to 10 p.m. at The Officers' Club. For information and tickets, contact KOSC at kosc_mcbh@yahoo.com.

Survey Participation Requested
The Department of Defense Inspector General is conducting a Trafficking in Persons survey through March 31. They are requesting maximum participation from all active duty service members, civilian Marines and contractors. We encourage all to log on and take the first part of the survey, which contains 22 questions that should take only a few minutes to complete.
To access the survey, log on to www.dodig.mil/tip%20survey/survey.htm. A password is not required.

HI 5¢ Redemption Site
HI 5¢ redemption services are available from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. every Friday in the parking lot across from the PX Annex. Separate glass, cans and plastic and remove lids before redeeming recyclables.
For more information, call Jim Sibert, Base Recycling at 257-4300.

E-Mail: editor@hawaiimarine.com, with "Letters to the Editor" in the subject line.
Mail: Public Affairs Office
Letters to the Editor
Bldg. 216, Box 63002
MCB Hawaii 96863
Fax: 257-2511

Important Phone Numbers
On-Base Emergencies 911
Military Police 257-7114
Child Protective Service 832-5300
Fraud, Waste, Abuse & EEO 257-8852
Business Management Hotline 257-3188
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E-MAIL: editor@hawaiimarine.com
FAX: 257-1289, PHONE: 257-8835



Lance Cpl. Edward deBree

Marines work on MarineNet to manage subordinate Marines' MCI courses at the Learning Resource Center aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii.

Program helps MCI management

Lance Cpl. Edward deBree
Combat Correspondent

Representatives from the College of Continuing Education visited Marine Corps Base Hawaii Feb. 1 and 2 to teach small-unit leaders how they can manage training and education for their Marines.

During their visit, the representatives spoke to noncommissioned officers, staff NCOs and officers at the Base Theater Feb. 1 to inform them about the MarineNet program. The following day, the representatives offered a hands-on training class on how to use the program.

MarineNet, an online-based software, allows Marine NCOs officers, staff NCOs and officers to access their Marines' training and MCI courses. While logged onto the Web site, Marines can order MCI courses as well as have their junior Marines sit down and take a course. The tests are graded as soon as the Marine is finished.

"This program gives commanders flexibility in meeting training requirements," said Maj. Larry D. Anderson, infrastructure officer, College of Continuing Education. "You can accomplish a lot online because it is faster than the traditional sit-down classroom environment with a stand-up instructor."

The 45-year-old Taylorsville, N.C. native added that studies have shown that students retain the material more from online courses because a multimedia instructor is more interactive and stimulates senses more than a regular instructor.

"The mission of this program is to provide multimedia instruction to Marines anywhere, at anytime," he said.

There are many advantages that this program has to offer to Marines, which include accessibility at the user's convenience, 24-hour availability, and high-speed Internet connection.

Another advantage MarineNet offers is access to Marines who are deployed overseas. Marines may access MCI courses in order to have them sent straight to them instead of having them mailed to their base, then to them.

"I'm sold on the Distant Learning program," said Anderson. "The program allowed me to achieve master's degree in business. You can get the same quality online as you could in person. It provides flexibility with the courses when you have time to do them. You don't have to be at a specific place at a certain time - when you don't have the time."

Representatives of the College of Continuing Education are currently visiting different Marine Corps bases to get the word out to Marines who can take full advantage of the system, said Anderson.

"I encourage Marines to log on and take a look at it," he said. "There are a tremendous amount of courses that count toward college credits for the Marines and their spouses. I think that the system will sell itself to Marines once the Marines take a look at it."

For more information on the College of Continuing Education or MarineNet, log on to <http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/cce>.

Traffic advisory from MPD

Four accidents in three weeks begs question: *Are you looking both ways?*

SSgt Eric Yahnel
Traffic Chief, MPD

Usually, the New Year is a time when we look ahead to a new start. Jan. 1 gives some something positive to look forward to. You know - "Out with the old. In with the new." Unfortunately, 2006 has gotten off to a bad start.

In the first three weeks of 2006, the base has had four traffic accidents - collisions that involved pedestrians and bicyclists. With the combined efforts of the Military Police Department and Base Safety, it would have been expected that the number of these types of accidents would have been reduced or stopped all together, but even the best laid plans can be compromised.

One of the missions of the MPD is to provide guidance on laws, orders and regulations pertaining to traffic safety to the

base community in order to help prevent mishaps on the road. This mission is one that the department takes very seriously and one that affects all, personally, because accidents impact our military family.

Jan. 5, a vehicle was traveling east in the parking lot adjacent to Building 5070 when a pedestrian stepped out from in between parked vehicles to enter into the thoroughway. The front bumper of the vehicle struck the pedestrian's leg causing minor injuries

Fortunately, the injury was minor, but the collision could have been prevented if the pedestrian would have looked both ways prior to entering the thoroughfare of the parking lot. Since the average reaction time of a driver is 1.5 seconds, the driver did not have time to stop.

Another accident was reported Jan 13. In this case, a vehicle was traveling east on Shimabukuro Place at the posted speed limit of 15 mph. Again, a pedestrian ran into the roadway from behind a large truck. Like the first accident mentioned, the vehicle was not able to stop in time to avoid striking the pedestrian. Like the first accident, the pedestrian was lucky to sustain only minor injuries. And, as with the first accident, this collision

could have also been avoided if the pedestrian would have looked both ways prior to entering the road.

Again on Jan. 13, an accident involving a motor vehicle and a bicyclist ended with the bicyclist sustaining minor injuries, but it could have been much worse. After looking both ways, while at a stop sign at the gas lanes, the motor vehicle attempted to merge onto Harris Road. As the operator of the vehicle moved into traffic, the bicyclist hit the car. Although there were some extenuating circumstances behind this particular collision, it could have been avoided if the driver would have taken another look back to his right, where he would have seen the bicyclist. The bicyclist could have also avoided the interaction had he stopped prior to entering the intersection.

There was another accident, this one during the evening of Jan. 24. This accident involved a vehicle that was approaching the intersection of Cushman Avenue and Mokapu Road, and a bicyclist who hit the vehicle's front bumper. The driver of the motor vehicle alleged that he stopped at the stop sign, looked both ways, and proceeded forward to merge into the intersection when he was hit. Traveling

west on a sidewalk, the bicyclist is lucky he only sustained minor injuries. The bicyclist was riding without a reflective belt or a light that was visible from 500 feet, so the accident could have been much worse. Again, this collision could have been avoided if the bicyclist was obeying the traffic laws and base regulations for operation of a bicycle.

Base Order P5500.15B, Chapter 7, 7011 outlines the requirements for riding a bicycle on base. These regulations should be read and understood by all personnel aboard base prior to getting on his or her bicycle. The fact is that the same traffic regulations and laws that apply to motor vehicles also apply to bicycles and pedestrians.

The accidents that you have just read about are unfortunate, but are not uncommon. The fact that no one was seriously injured or killed in these accidents does not make them trivial matters. If the rules of the road are taken seriously and strictly adhered to, accidents like these can be avoided altogether.

For more information on the base rules and regulations regarding motor vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians, contact the MPD Traffic Division at 257-1146.

Weekend weather outlook

Today

Day — partly cloudy with scattered rain showers, east winds 10 to 15 mph, 40 percent chance of rain.

Night — partly cloudy with isolated rain showers, east winds up to 10 mph, 20 percent chance of rain.

High — 77
Low — 66

Saturday

Day — partly cloudy with continued isolated rain showers, east winds from 10 to 15 mph, 40 percent chance of rain.

Night — partly cloudy with isolated rain showers, east winds 10 to 15 mph, 20 percent chance of rain.

High — 77
Low — 67

Sunday

Day — partly cloudy with isolated rain showers, east winds 10 to 15 mph, 40 percent chance of rain.

Night — partly cloudy with isolated showers, east winds at 10 to 15 mph, 20 percent chance of rain.

High — 77
Low — 68



LEFT: 1st Lt. Stephen J. Boada, (left) patrols with members of Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment through the Alisheng Valley in Afghanistan on the morning of May 8, 2005. The patrol was attacked by insurgents later in the day, killing two Marines.

1st Lt. Sam A. Monte

BELOW: Boada poses for a photograph somewhere near the Afghanistan/Pakistan border in early 2005. Boada was awarded the Silver Star for his actions when his patrol came under attack on May 8, 2005.

Courtesy of 1st Lt. Stephen J. Boada

Boada: 3-hour patrol becomes 22-hour ordeal

Boada, From A-1

just passed us. We'll get them on the way back," over the radio.

"The Marines were getting pretty amped up at that moment, and we could recognize two of the voices over the radio to be cell leaders who were responsible for a police station that was rocketed just before we arrived," said Boada. "It was difficult to see anything around us, though, due to the mountains. We knew what area the enemy was in but couldn't pinpoint anything."

At that time, 1st Lt. Sam A. Monte, platoon commander, directed a squad and a 240 Gulf team, to go southeast onto a hilltop to scan the area. Shortly, they received a call back from the squad who relayed that they had spotted 10 to 12 individuals across the valley who had automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades in their possession.

"At the same time, we heard a single rifle shot, but the round didn't actually land anywhere near us," said Boada. "At that time, we couldn't tell whether it was caused by sniper fire, or whether it was possibly a signal."

The machine-gun team was then directed to engage toward the enemy who was located roughly seven to 800 meters away, said Boada. The individuals then fled into a ravine up the mountainside.

"The support by fire remained on the hilltop, as we decided to make our way toward the enemy," said Boada. "As we began moving into the draw, a brief firefight broke out, but none of us were injured."

The Marines continued and crossed a river that rose up to their chests. As they began to climb up the hillside, they again contacted higher authority who was able to push a section of A-10 Warthogs out to the area.

"Corporal Johnny Polander, a squad leader, was on the radio on the hilltop, and he was able to let us know where the individuals were located," said Boada. "At that time, Lance Corporal Kirven, a team leader, was able to send a 203 smoke round to mark the cave that the individuals entered. We also popped smoke in ours, and the SBF did the same thing. We just had different colors so the aircraft knew the difference."

After that was complete, Boada informed the pilots of the situation on the ground, and they proceeded to use 30 mm cannons on the enemy's

cave, making three or four passes with 2.75 mm rockets. After every pass, the SBF was again contacted and given any adjustments that were needed for aircraft fire.

"When they ran out of ammo, more A-10 Warthogs came out and there were about eight or nine passes made — total," said Boada. "During that time, we could hear the enemy over the radio making exclaims such as, 'That went just by my head.' So they were indirectly helping us adjust our fire."

When the situation was under control, the Marines began their long trek up the mountainside to assess the situation and check for any enemy KIAs, according to Boada.

Once reaching the caves, Boada teamed up with Sgt. Robert R. Campbell, a squad leader, and began searching the different caves with the other Marines. This was when Marines heard Lance Cpl. Nicholas C. Kirven identify a dead body. He called out and Cpl. Richard P. Schoener came to provide security for a dead check.

"Sergeant Campbell and I were only probably 25 meters away when we first heard the bursts from an AK-47 and the screams," said Boada. "The squad began circling toward Kirven and Schoener who were laying on the ground, but the gunfire wouldn't stop and we couldn't tell exactly how many people were firing at us."

Most of the Marines managed to find some cover and Cpl. Chinana, a scout sniper attached to Kilo Company, had a 203 but wasn't able to fire because the weapon needed at least 30 meters to arm itself and the Marines were too close. Chinana attempt to mark the cave with a 203 smoke round, but the round ricocheted and Chinana received a bullet frag on his scalp line and fell back.

"We really didn't have any other option at that point, because the Marines were laying so close to the mouth of the cave," said Boada. "I made the call to move up closer so we could see where the fire was coming from and attempt to grab the downed Marines."

Boada popped a smoke grenade as he and Cpl. Troy Arndt, team leader, made their way to a position very close to the Marines.

"The fire was still coming as we popped more smoke and kind of leap frogged from rock to rock," said Boada. "Corporal Arndt attempted to grab one of the Marines by the



“We could hear them discussing how many of us there were and how we would never make it out alive.”

1st Lt. Stephen J. Boada

Silver Star recipient

sappy plate carrier, but the gear ripped and he fell. By that time, the smoke was clearing up, and I grabbed him and we got to cover again."

At this point, Boada said he could reach out and touch the downed Marines, because they were so close. Although rounds were still coming in, he then grabbed a fragmentation grenade and threw it.

"I ended up repeating the process about four times," said Boada. "Corporal Arndt would prep the grenades for me. I would shout, 'Cover and fire,' and throw the grenades. Corporal Arndt did some amazing things out there as a young corporal, I hope he gets recognized for something."

At this time, Campbell and his Marines were providing support while Arndt and Boada were attempting to gain the opportunity to retrieve the downed Marines.

"We had to actually shoot over Arndt's and Boada's heads to cover them," said Campbell. "I admire both of them and their bravery."

Finally, there was silence and no movement in the cave, said Boada. Another corporal made the call to search the cave. It was secure.

Several attempts were made

to resuscitate Schoener and Kirven, but the CPR was useless, said Boada. They had passed away.

"By that time, it was about 1800 and getting dark," said Boada. "We weren't prepared for a night operation and there was a lack of both food and water. We set up an LZ to try to get a MEDIVAC for the Marines, but they couldn't send one to us because of the weather."

At this time, Boada said the Marines were beginning to get frustrated with the whole situation.

"They were doing a heck of a job out there, and they had just lost two of their friends," said Boada. "After everything that happened, though, they still remained focused."

It was at that time that the Marines began to carry their fallen comrades in ponchos.

"The Marines tried to buy some donkeys to help carry the Marines, but it was no use," said Boada. "They carried the Marines the whole time, about seven miles through mountainous terrain."

"What had started as a three-hour patrol ended as a 22-hour ordeal," said Campbell. "It was the worst day of my life."

AC130 support was available and would give the Marines a heads up if there were enemy forces up ahead. They were able to engage and neutralize 25 individuals who were setting up ambushes in two separate areas, explained Boada.

"We continued to move throughout the night and arrived back to our vehicles at about 04 or 0500," said Boada. "The Marines really did a hell of a job out there. They weren't even my Marines, but I know I couldn't have picked a better bunch."

Boada said the hardest part about the deployment was having to leave the Marines he was with upon returning to K-Bay — especially the Marines he was with on that fateful day.

"They were ready for anything — even Kirven and Schoener," said Boada. "Those two were great Marines."

Boada received the Purple Heart for his injuries and the Silver Star for his gallant actions against the enemy while serving as a forward observer and forward air controller that day, but he remains humbled by the experience.

"I think about what happened out there every day and

will for as long as I live," admitted Boada. "I think about what we could have done differently. What we could have done to have those two Marines walk home with us."

Boada is now back with 1/12, but said he should be going with the Marines of 3/3 when they deploy to Iraq.

"It just doesn't feel right, and I regret not having the opportunity to deploy with them again," said Boada. "I try to keep in touch with all of the Marines I was with."

Campbell said he thinks the award presented to Boada is much deserved.

"He is an artillery officer," said the Jackson, Tenn. native. "The things he did, he didn't have to do. He put himself in harms way and did everything he could do to try and save those two Marines. We all did everything we could do, and it was truly an honor to work with Lieutenant Boada."

Boada felt differently about his role in the situation.

"The Marines I was with that day deserve the recognition," said Boada. "They all need to be talked about — talked about more than me, they are all amazing."

On the skyline ... with 1/3

by Sgt. Joe Lindsay

On the Skyline is a weekly column written by Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay, Combat Correspondent Sgt. Joe Lindsay who is deployed to Afghanistan with the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment's Lava Dogs in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

In Memory of Lance Cpl. Billy Brixey Jr.



Sgt. Joe Lindsay

Marines from 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment bow their heads in remembrance of Lance Cpl. Billy Brixey Jr., during a memorial service in his honor aboard Camp Blessing Jan 31. Brixey died from wounds sustained in an insurgent attack on his convoy in Afghanistan Jan. 25



From the Edge

Staff Sgt. Mark Robinson, Newark, N.J., infantry platoon sergeant, 1/3, Asadabad, Afghanistan



“First and foremost, I would like to personally express my sorrow to the Brixey family for their loss. I would like to let them know that their son fought a good fight. We will continue that fight for freedom. May God bless Lance Corporal Brixey and his family.

To all the people in New Jersey – Mom especially – I want to say, ‘I love you, and I’ll be home soon.’

To everybody in 3rd Marines back in Hawaii, know that we are continuing the good work you did, and we’re doing our job over here. The enemy is on the run and we’re fighting the good fight.

To Mary and Aaron – I love you and think of you both every day.”

Marine wins lottery ... of a different kind

Sgt. Joe Lindsay
Combat Correspondent

Growing up in the communist shadow cast by dictator Fidel Castro’s regime, the young boy knew nothing of toys, store-bought clothes, or the world outside his immediate dilapidated neighborhood in the Havana City borough of Havana, Cuba.

Still, it was a happy childhood. Sticks, stones, and empty aluminum cans became playthings, while tightly wrapped plastic bags became makeshift soccer balls. The world revolved around the neighborhood, family and friends. As a child, he knew nothing else, not including what they taught him in the government run schools — things like an impending invasion from the so-called imperialistic United States. When the attack came, it was always when; never if, he was taught that it was the duty of every Cuban citizen, children included, to grab a rifle and defend the homeland.

“I was always scared as a boy that America was going to come and try to kill me and my family and take away our house,” said

Pfc. Norris Atesiano, a 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment administrative clerk who is currently serving in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. “I am no longer that boy, and I am no longer afraid.”

Atesiano's journey from boyhood to manhood began earlier than most. He puts the age when he really had to start growing up at around 7.

“When I was 7, my father, two uncles, and a close family friend got into a raft and rowed themselves from Cuba to America,” recalled Atesiano. “It took them six days. Somehow, without so much as a working engine and against all odds, they made it.”

So that Atesiano would not worry, his parents decided not to tell him of the journey until after his father left.

“My dad was former Cuban military, and he trained hard for the journey — as if he was preparing for a combat operation,” said Atesiano. “He would take me to the beach all the time. I thought, ‘Boy, my dad sure likes to swim a lot,’” chuckled Atesiano as he recalled his father’s physical training regiment in

the months before the trip. “Every day he was out swimming in the ocean, doing push ups, running. Little did I know then what he was preparing for.”

And little did Atesiano or his father know it would be seven years before they would see each other again.

“After my dad was granted political asylum, we applied to Washington, D.C., for visas every year,” said Atesiano. “For Cubans, at the time, the system was a lottery, meaning they picked a certain amount of applications per year and reviewed those applications. On the seventh year of trying, when I was 14, we finally hit the visa lottery and were allowed to come to America.”

Those seven years were long and hard, explained Atesiano, and the family considered alternate methods of reuniting with his father on more than one occasion.

“A couple times, we came very close to getting on boats to try to sneak into America, but my mother was always too worried

See Atesiano, A-5

Atesiano, From A-4

for my safety,” recalled Atesiano. “It is a dangerous trip. Many die on the way – from drowning, dehydration, sharks, or simply getting lost at sea – while others who are caught before reaching the shores of America face deportation camps in America and far worse — in Cuba. You’ve actually got to touch land on American soil. If you’re still in the ocean and two feet from land and immigration catches you, you might as well be a million miles away. It is for nothing.”

When Atesiano's visa was finally approved, it was just in the nick of time.

“I was almost 15, and in Cuba when you turn 15, you have to sign up for compulsory military service,” explained Atesiano. “Even though you’re not forced to serve until you turn 18, once you’re in the system, the Cuban government is not going to let you out of the country until you do your time in the military. I barely had time to get my papers in order.”

Atesiano started school soon after arriving in Miami. “I was nervous because I didn’t know any English,” recalled Atesiano. “That didn’t turn out to be a problem. In Miami, you could live your whole life without speaking English – even in school. I mean, officially it was in English, but in reality, everyone was still speaking Spanish. A lot of my new school friends didn’t even make an effort to learn the language. For me, though, my dad had always told me how important it was to learn English once I came to America, so I studied and learned on my own — outside of school. In about two years I could speak what would pass as fluently, but in truth, I consider myself to still be learning the language.”

After graduating from high school, Atesiano worked for a couple of years, floating from job to job in a continuing effort to help his family financially. It is a responsibility he maintained throughout his teenage years and one that continues today.

“In spite of the scare tactics and revisionist history taught to us in the Cuban governments schools, my childhood, like most kids in Cuba, was a happy one,” said Atesiano. “From the time you are born until about the age of 12, Cuban kids are allowed to be just that – kids. We didn’t have anything, but we didn’t know any different either. I never owned clothes from a store until I came to America. My grandma made all our clothes.”

As he grew older, it was against that backdrop that Atesiano learned the harsh realities of survival under a communist dictatorship.

“By the time you hit 12 or 13, it’s a fact of life that you are expected to start contributing to the family — financially,” explained Atesiano. “The communist Cuban government gives you monthly food rations – things like rice, beans, flour and butter – but it’s never enough. Salaries are based on how many family members you have. My aunt, who was a successful attor-



Sgt. Joe Lindsay

Pfc. Norris Atesiano, an administrative clerk for 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment currently serving in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom, keeps a steady watch on his post aboard Jalalabad Airfield. Atesiano came to the United States from his native Cuba when he was 14 and now considers Miami and America his home.

ney by Cuban standards, had to walk to work because she could never afford a car. Teachers, for example, make about six dollars a month.”

“The only way to make money in Cuba is to hustle,” continued Atesiano. “By hustle, I don’t mean selling drugs or anything like that, but you do have to sell whatever you don’t absolutely need to make ends meet. For example, if I had a banana, instead of eating it, I might try to sell it. Or try to sell any extra clothes I had. It’s just the way of life.”

After being exposed to life in America, Atesiano came to the realization that he could better himself and his family.

“In Cuba, ambition is frowned upon by the government, but America is the land of opportunity,” said Atesiano. “In America, I can provide for my family like a man. In America, I can be whatever I want to be.”

For Atesiano, what it turned out he wanted to be more than anything was a United States Marine.

“I wanted to repay the United States for giving me and my family the chance to have a better life,” explained Atesiano about his decision to join the Marine Corps. “There is no better way to pay back a country than to serve that country.”

Now, roughly 10 months to the day that he first stepped on the “yellow footprints” at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in

San Diego, Atesiano finds himself in a combat zone in Afghanistan.

“I’m amazed at how fast he picks things up,” said Lance Cpl. Tyler Weed, a 1/3 administrative clerk and Iraq veteran who served in Fallujah with 1/3 on their last combat deployment. “Coming basically straight from MOS (military occupational specialty) school to a combat zone can’t be easy. He’s handled it remarkably well,” admitted the Tacoma, Wash. native.

Gunnery Sgt. Philip Myers, 1/3 administrative chief, said he couldn’t agree more.

“Pfc. Atesiano has risen to the challenge,” said the Ewa Beach, Hawaii native. “He’s been in the Corps less than a year, and he’s already in a combat zone. For a lot of people, that would be overwhelming, but he has taken it all in stride and is proving himself to be a Marine who deserves not only respect but also responsibility beyond that normally afforded to someone with his experience.”

According to Cpl. Ramon Aldana, a 1/3 administrative clerk from Whittier, Calif., Atesiano performs at a level that belies his time in service.

“Pfc. Atesiano embodies everything that you would expect a Marine to be,” commented Aldana. “By his every action, he strives to and does in fact live up to our core values of honor, courage and commitment. His story is inspiring to me. My family came to this country from Nicaragua when I was 5. I’ve lived practically my whole life in America. But for him, he’s only been in America a few short years, and look what’s he’s accomplished. I am proud to call him one of my Marines.”

For his part, Atesiano said he wouldn’t want to be any place else.

“I’m glad I’m here,” exclaimed Atesiano, as he passionately explained the parallels between his country of birth and the one on whose soil he currently serves.

“Afghanistan reminds me a lot of Cuba. Not in the sense of climate or landscape obviously, but in the sense that both the Cubans and the Afghans have been oppressed for so long.”

“Like I said before,” continued Atesiano, “when I was 7 years old, our Cuban teachers told us that we had to be prepared to pick up a rifle and fight the evil Americans. It’s the same thing here, where religious zealots and insurgents spread lies about America and say that we are going to try to take away their religion and destroy Islam.”

“Afghan children get brainwashed by the insurgents, just like the government tried to brainwash us when I was a kid in Cuba,” remarked Atesiano. “In Cuba, we didn’t know of anything outside of Cuba. We didn’t know that everything we were being taught in school was a lie. When I see these people over here, it reminds me of where I grew up. These people here don’t have anything. All they want is a chance for a better life. I want to help give them that.”



1/12: Unit gains experience

1/12, From A-1

the unit participated in, due to the fact that they specialize in artillery fire and weapon familiarization. “We weren’t allowed to shoot rounds off in Okinawa,” said 28-year-old Davoren. “But in Yausubetsu we could perform all our training using live-fire rounds.”

Beside the fact that the Marines gained knowledge and experience by training in an unfamiliar environment with their entire unit, they also helped the entire Marine Corps by providing personnel in a non-hostile environment. One aspect of the deployment that is sometimes overlooked, but very important, according to 1st Lt. Charles A. Mallette, executive officer, Bravo Battery, 1/12, “is the fact that by providing stability in Japan, they freed up personnel in other Marine Corps units to deploy in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In a letter to the families of the deployed Marines, Mallette included a statement that read: “The reality of being forward deployed is very real and the sacrifice of being away from family is very present.”

“It is very difficult for some of the Marines, especially those with new wives and children, to leave them and go on deployment,” said Mallette, a Jacksonville, N.C. native. “I think a lot of them took advantage of the deployment, though. It is awesome to be able to see another country and experience the cultural diversity.”

The Marines were granted liberty at times and some were able to go on scenic and historic tours offered in different areas of Japan such as Tokyo.

Overall, the Marines said they gained the knowledge and experience the deployment was geared toward improving.

“Their collective effort contributed to the Marine Corps ability to affect peace and stability through the Pacific,” wrote Mallette in a letter to families, “while simultaneously continuing to prosecute Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom.”

SSWS: MCBH to host first symposium

SSWS, From A-1

and motivation to inspire women in the sea services to remain on active duty and to positively contribute within their units and commands. Male leaders who supervise women could also benefit from the information to be presented.

The Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard are working closely to plan this year’s event, which will be hosted by Marine Corps Base Hawaii. Committee members are being actively recruited from each of the sea services. For more information about the symposium or to learn how you may volunteer as a committee member, contact any of the following service representatives: Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Desarae Janszen, desarae.a.janszen@uscg.mil, (808) 541-2125; Navy Lt. Cmdr. Fawn Snow, frsnow@hawaii.med.navy.mil, 473-1880, ext. 248; and Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Claudia Lamantia, claudia.lamantia@usmc.mil, (808) 257-8839.

More details are available at www.sswls.org.



Hearts: Marines make progress with locals

Hearts, From A-1

meetings is to make sure we help them get the things they need in order to govern themselves and have an effective government and a safe and secure environment in which to conduct their day-to-day living operations.”

“1/3’s mission is to support the Afghan people and the Afghan government,” continued Spurlock. “We’re here to help them. We’re at their service. The better we can prepare them to assume full control of their country, the sooner we can go home.”

Staff Sgt. Mark Robinson, a 1/3 infantry platoon officer with Charlie Company, said positive relationships with the Afghan people and village elders are formed and based upon mutual respect.

“If you come into my neighborhood back home, without giving the proper respect, there’s going to be problems,” said the Newark, N.J. native. “It’s the same thing here. We respect the Afghan people and their cul-

ture and by respecting them, they in turn respect us. That’s how it works. By meeting with and getting to know the locals and village elders, we build trust. The Afghan people are good people who want the insurgents out of their country as much as we do.”

According to 1st Lt. Jerome Greco, executive officer for Charlie Company, 1/3, things are getting better in Afghanistan.

“I don’t think anybody can say that Afghanistan is not progressing,” said the Moorestown, N.J. native. “This country has clearly been moving forward over the past few years. There is still an element of insurgents – really terrorists – but the vast majority of the population has functioning governments and a desire to see democracy work.”

Greco also noted that meeting with local village elders is a key step in continuing the positive relation-



Sgt. Joe Lindsay

A small Afghan girl appears mesmerized by Cpl. Jose GonzalezGonzalez, as she leans forward to get a closer look. GonzalezGonzalez — an administrative clerk from Hillsboro, Ore., with 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, was in the small village of Yargul as part of a 1/3 humanitarian mission. Marines with 1/3 also provided security during a meeting between Afghan village elders and U.S. personnel.

ships formed by previous units.

“Everything we do impacts the locals, and everything they do impacts us,” said

Greco. “Most of the people here are openly happy when they see us. They want the insurgents out of their country. With the type of attitudes

I have seen among the people, I am not concerned with Afghanistan failing as a free and democratic nation. They are going to make it.”